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### ***published in***

Journal of Business Research  
2019

### ***DOI (link to publisher)***

[10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.08.008](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.08.008)

### ***document version***

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

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### ***citation for published version (APA)***

van Dijk, M., Van Herk, H., & Prins, R. (2019). Choosing your charity: The importance of value congruence in two-stage donation choices. *Journal of Business Research*, 105, 283-292.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.08.008>

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# Choosing your charity: The importance of value congruence in two-stage donation choices



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## ARTICLE INFO

### Keywords:

NPO marketing  
Value congruence  
Personal values  
Charitable donations  
NPO values instrument  
Two-stage model

## ABSTRACT

Charitable donations constitute choices, and donors' values influence both the choice to donate and the selected nonprofit organization (NPO). The current study proposes a new instrument to measure NPO values. The proposed two-stage analytical procedure is novel in this research area. The first stage shows that the personal value of universalism drives the general decision to donate. The second stage reveals that donating to a specific NPO depends on the congruency between the NPO values of the organization and the individual donor's NPO values. Furthermore, distinct NPO values are relevant to donation decisions such that NPO values can attract a particular type of donor to an NPO. These findings have pertinent implications for NPOs' chosen positioning strategies as it allows NPOs to collectively guard the qualities that increase general donations and individually distinguish themselves based on the specific NPO values that ensure alignment with their own donors.

## 1. Introduction

Receiving monetary donations is critical to nonprofit organizations (NPOs), because it enables them to fund their charitable programs and legitimizes their existence. The dynamic nature of NPO landscapes (Botner, Mishra, & Mishra, 2015) also creates a strong impetus to professionalize fundraising efforts in the competitive European NPO sector (Fondation de France, 2015). If they can attract committed individual donors, NPOs gain a solid inflow of funds and signals of their societal relevance (Reed, Aquino, & Levy, 2007). Such purposeful donations suggest durable relationships, stable charitable motives, and a true connection between the donor and the organization. Because charitable motives also pertain to the core values of NPOs, they should be integrated into NPO fundraising strategies (Stride, 2006).

Two main drivers of monetary contributions structure purposeful donation choices. First, studies have considered the way people make a general decision to offer a charitable donation (Bekkers & Wiepking, 2011; Lee & Chang, 2007; Stern, 2000) to any NPO. Second, other literature has considered the choice to donate to a specific NPO, which determines which NPOs receive donations (Peattie, 2015; Sargeant, Ford, & Hudson, 2008). We push this literature forward by combining both two stages. Purposeful donation choice thus constitutes a two-stage decision process. In this two-stage donation decision, we find values to be of influence on the general decision to make a donation as well as the selection of a particular NPO.

Personal values refer to desirable goals that serve as guiding principles in people's lives (Schwartz, 1992). Schwartz's values theory proposes a set of specific values that likely are relevant in NPO contexts; we refer to them as *NPO values*, defined as stable beliefs that are shared by an NPO and a donor about what represent good and desirable activities for a nonprofit organization. Specifically, we investigate the congruence in the NPO values held by an individual donor and the organization, such that this research takes its impetus from Schwartz's values theory and value congruity research (Edwards & Cable, 2009; Tuškej, Golob, & Podnar, 2013).

Non-profit marketing distinguishes itself from corporate marketing in a profound way. The NPO serves as an intermediary between the donor and the beneficiary. Donations thus are a service where the fundamental basis of the exchange always involves at least three actors (i.e. donor, non-profit and a beneficiary). Subsequently, the relation between a donor and an NPO is characterized by both creation of worth by the donor and the NPO together (Vargo & Lusch, 2008), as well as the inclusion of societal beneficiaries in that exchange (Bennett, 2018). Although values are already an element in the toolkit of corporate marketers (Zhang & Bloemer, 2008), they deserve special attention for nonprofit marketing as values could be the basis of worth creation for nonprofit organizations (Stride, 2006). In particular, as values drive peoples' decisions to perform prosocial behaviors (Schwartz, 2010).

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<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.08.008>

Received 11 January 2018; Received in revised form 5 August 2019; Accepted 6 August 2019

Available online 04 September 2019

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Based on these theoretical foundations, this study makes several contributions to research into nonprofit marketing and decision processes in donation decisions. First, as the first study to distinguish general from specific donation choices to different NPOs, it responds to calls to investigate the motivations of general donations as antecedents of the motivations to donate to a specific organization (Hager & Hedberg, 2016). We answer this call by applying a Heckman (1979) selection model in the context of purposeful donation choice.

Second, we introduce value congruity in the non-profit marketing literature and contribute with a NPO values instrument that allows for the consideration of congruity. Congruity has been used in fields such as interorganizational relations (Brown & Treviño, 2006; Edwards & Cable, 2009; Schuh et al., 2016), consumer service relations (Zhang & Bloemer, 2008) and contextualized values for human resource management (Brown & Treviño, 2006; Lages & Fernandes, 2005). As the donor of an NPO does not receive any benefits from the monetary donation, understanding value congruity becomes particularly important. There are no personal benefits that are gained from choosing an NPO by receiving better service or profit from the organization as we would see in commercial contexts; the key to donor engagement commitment toward the NPO which is enhanced when there is value congruity.

Third, this study prioritizes a central position for values in non-profit marketing strategies. Due to their increasing professionalization, NPOs face critical decisions about their creation of worth for donors, whereas there is more and more doubt about the effectiveness of for-profit instruments in the non-profit sector (Schulman & Sargeant, 2013). The congruity between donors and NPOs on NPO values is a source of worth creation. In particular, we show using our NPO values instrument that specific NPO values lead to a higher donation likelihood for specific NPOs; for instance, an NPOs emphasizing “fun for donors” may lose donors considering “changing society” important. In this, we contribute by showing that congruity between NPO values profiles of organizations and of individuals can extend our understanding of worth co-creation in the complex context of non-profit organizations.

## 2. Conceptual background and hypotheses

### 2.1. Personal values and NPO values

The point of departure for this research is the dominant theory on personal values (Schwartz, 1992). Studies confirm its universality in more than 70 nations (Cieciuch, Schwartz, & Vecchione, 2013), and it represents the most relevant values theory in relation to individual behavior (Steenkamp & de Jong, 2010). Values serve as guiding principles in people's lives, underlying their dispositions and behaviors (Schwartz, 2015). Their relevance for evaluating brands also has been established (Torelli, Özsomer, Carvalho, Keh, & Maehle, 2012), and values offer the promise of moving beyond functional associations with NPOs (Batra & Keller, 2016). Schwartz's theory consists of ten values: benevolence, universalism, self-direction, stimulation, hedonism, achievement, power, security, conformity, and tradition,<sup>1</sup> ordered in a circumplex structure (Fig. 1).

Two important implications follow from this circumplex structure. First, personal values that are adjacent to each other are compatible and more likely to be held strongly by the same person. For example, benevolence and universalism share a concern for other people, though they differ in their focus on known or unknown others. Second, oppositions exist within individuals (Van Herk, Schoonees, Groenen, & van Rosmalen, 2018), such that people who consider universalism more important likely regard power as less important. In our study context, NPO values then constitute a specific application of values theory.

### 2.2. Donation choice

We consider the donation choice of a purposeful donation. The general decision to make purposeful donations differs from decisions to donate to a specific organization, as reflected in the studies summarized in Table 1. Although all these articles address motivations for donating to NPOs, one stream of research relates to the general act of donating (Boenigk & Mayr, 2016; Habibpour, Peiffer, Pepermans, & Jegers, 2018). Both these studies address a general willingness for donors, which is unrelated to the characteristics of non-profit organizations. These articles tend to conceive of donations as prosocial behaviors, such that people engage in donating to make a societal contribution. The driving force of prosociality has also been found in different behavioral studies, showing the existence of an internal drive to donate (Leliveld & Risselada, 2017; van Diepen, Donkers & Frances, 2007).

A second stream of research focuses on the different motives for donations to specific NPOs and the organizational characteristics NPOs can differ on (Wiepking, 2010). In this research domain, comparisons of NPOs usually rely on either their organizational characteristics or the goals of specific organizations (Bennett, 2003; Kinsbergen & Tolsma, 2013). Sargeant, Ford, and West (2006) discuss how commitment to one NPO can be understood by reviewing the perceived emotional, familial and demonstrable utilities of that one organization.

A third stream of research delineates individual preferences for specific NPOs as a process where donors search for NPOs that are in line with their own preferences. These studies thus focus on individual preferences in searching an NPO. For example, Bennett (2012) discusses how a donor's NPO donation choices can be driven by the psychological need to satisfy self-image needs and Boenigk and Helmig (2013) illuminate the importance of donor-nonprofit identification for donor loyalty. People select different types of NPOs based on their moral intuitions.

We assess the congruity between NPOs and donors, in terms of their comprehensive NPO values. In this sense, our research moves the concept of donation choice to a donor-NPO match in order to reveal the origin of donor-NPO congruity in a set of NPO choices. We thus explicitly differentiate the choice to make a donation in general from the choice to donate to a specific NPO. Moreover, we investigate NPO value congruity according to the NPO values of an individual donor and the NPO values of an organization. In doing so, we build on and expand the self-congruity focus of prior research (Haj-Salem, Chebat, Michon, & Oliveira, 2016; Sirgy, 1985), in which we combine NPO values to fully understand what drives the motivation to donate to that NPO. Accordingly, we develop specific hypotheses to delineate the role of values in general decisions to donate and decisions to donate to a specific NPO.

#### 2.2.1. General donations and personal values

Personal values inform general donations, because they precede this behavior and activate pertinent norms, thereby guiding people to pursue goals (Brunsø, Scholderer, & Grunert, 2004; Krystallis, Vassallo, & Chrysosoidis, 2012; Thøgersen & Ölander, 2002). As personal values are defined as goals that serve as guiding principles in people's lives (Schwartz, 1992), universalism is critical for motivating prosocial behavior, such as volunteering for civic groups (Karp, 1996). Universalism stresses the pursuit of equality and justice for all people and nature. It can prompt people to pursue prosocial behavior as an important goal in their lives (Briggs, Peterson, & Gregory, 2010). Universalism emphasizes care for unknown others and nature, so it is pertinent to donations in which the benefactors are unknown and distant from the donors. A monetary donation to an NPO constitutes prosocial behavior (Webb, Green, & Brashear, 2000), so the extent to which people consider universalism as an important value and goal in their lives should be relevant for motivating their donation choice. Thus:

**H1.** Compared with other personal values, universalism values are most positively related to the likelihood of making a monetary donation to any NPO.

<sup>1</sup> Detailed definitions of these values are in Appendix A.

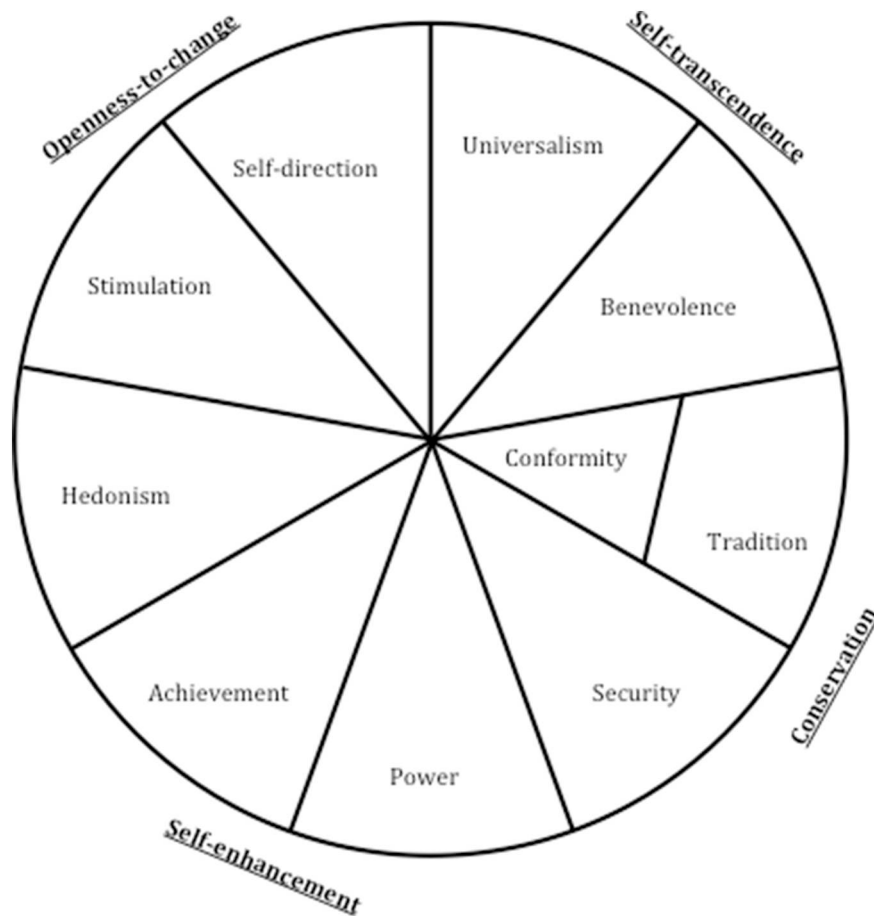


Fig. 1. Schwartz values circumplex.  
Adopted from Schwartz (1992).

### 2.2.2. Donation to specific NPOs and value congruence

When identifying with a particular organization, people feel connected to it, because of the values they have in common (Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994). Consumers are more likely to respond favorably to people and messages that are congruent with their own values (Sagiv & Schwartz, 2000; Torelli et al., 2012), especially when these decisions are made without social pressure (Bardi & Schwartz, 2003). This mechanism follows the reasoning of similarity-attraction theory, as is dominant in social psychology (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005) and has been related to value congruence (Zhang & Bloemer, 2008). Similarity-attraction theory entails that actors are more likely to respond positively to each other when they display similar characteristics. In this case, the similarity between the donor and the NPO is sought at the level of NPO values. Donors express the worth they see in the interaction with an NPO through their donation. As purposeful donations are made privately, donors are more likely to pick an organization that is congruent with their own values. The worth of a donor-nonprofit relation is created in the donation exchange.

Therefore, donors should appreciate an NPO more if all own NPO values are congruent with all NPO values of that organization (Bhattacharya & Elsbach, 2002) in the case of purposeful donations. Thus, when an individual donor's NPO values profile is more similar to that of an organization, the donor is more likely to choose to donate to that organization. Accordingly,

**H2.** Higher NPO value congruence between an individual donor and a specific NPO has a positive effect on the donor's likelihood of donating to that specific NPO.

## 3. Data and analytical approach

This study begins with the development and validation of the concept of NPO values. Table 2 presents the data collection process.

### 3.1. Development and validation of NPO values instrument

The development process consisted of three steps: (1) item generation through a review of the literature and consultation with experts in the field, (2) item reduction based on the results of a quantitative pilot study with a consumer sample and expert consultations, and (3) validation of the NPO values profile by assessing item diversity across NPOs.

#### 3.1.1. Item generation

To generate an initial set of NPO values that capture the diverse elements that people consider important and that can differentiate NPOs (Bennett, 2003), we started with Schwartz's (1992) values theory. However, the process for developing NPO value items differs from conventional approaches to constructing a reflective scale (Churchill Churchill Jr., 1979), because we seek items to which people will respond differently (Weber & Federico, 2013). Therefore, we compiled an initial list of items with the assistance of experts. Specifically, marketing managers of 13 Dutch NPOs considered the relevance of the items and suggested additional key items, based on their organizational experience. This process resulted in a list of items that reflects the diverse associations people might assign to different NPOs.

**Table 1**  
Overview of previous literature

Authors	Focal interest in relation to this study	Type of Donation		Antecedents of Donation		
		General donation	Donation to specific NPO	Individual preferences	NPO characteristics	Donor–NPO congruence
<i>Donations in general</i>						
Habibpour et al. (2018)	Past donation behavior at a societal level; donation behavior is stable over time. There is a general willingness to donate in a specific segment of the population.	x				
Boenigk & Mayr (2016)	Happiness: life satisfaction is a cause of charitable behavior. People who are satisfied with their own life are more likely to make donations.	x				
Leliveld & Risselada (2017)	Dynamic nature of charitable donation decisions		x	x	x	
van Diepen et al. (2009)	Dynamic nature of donations upon request in a direct mailing.					
<i>Organizational characteristics and donations to specific NPOs</i>						
Wiepking (2010)	Sector and marketing channel: the orientation of the NPO can influence the donation likelihood of specific segments in society.		x		x	
Kinsbergen & Tolsma (2013)	General social trust and organizational capabilities: Organizations within the same sector (international relief). Characteristics of the organization can influence donation likelihood.		x	x	x	
Sargeant et al. (2006)	Trust and commitment to one specific NPO in relation to perceptions of perceived characteristics of NPO.		x	x	x	
<i>Individual preferences for specific NPOs</i>						
Bennett (2003)	Charity preference: personal values and preferences can influence the likelihood of donating to a particular type of charity		x	x		
Boenigk & Helmig (2013)	Organizational identification and identity salience: donor-nonprofit identification is important for non-profit loyalty and distinct from identity salience.		x	x		
Bennett (2012)	Self-assessed fit with self-image: people pursue charity portfolio's that satisfy their own self-image concerns.		x	x		x
Nilsson et al. (2016)	Moral foundations and the preference for charities with a morally relevant profile		x	x	x	
This study	Personal values and NPO value congruence	x	x	x	x	x



**Table 2**  
Overview of data collection.

	Goal	Source
(1) Development and validation of NPO values instrument	Item generation for NPO values	Literature review: Initial set of items
	Item reduction for NPO values	Field experts: Addition of items considered relevant in practice. Consumer panel (n = 628): Evaluation of importance attributed items for NPOs in general.
(2) NPO scores on NPO values instrument	Item validation for NPO values	Field experts: Review of managerial relevance of selected items
(3) Individual donation	Obtain NPO values of 13 NPOs	Consumer panel (n = 1670):
	Obtain individual-specific measures	Consumer panel (n = 2157): Measurement of dependent variable (donation behaviour), importance attributed to NPO value items, Schwartz values (PVQ) and control variables
(4) NPO publicity spending	Obtain NPO-specific measure to capture NPO spending on publicity	Publicly available online: Retrieving background information on NPOs regarding budget for publicity.

### 3.1.2. Item reduction

The second step was to reduce the number of items. We employed a GfK consumer panel, such that 628 respondents rated the full list of 87 items (Table 2). We adopted a clustering approach to identify the items to which people responded most divergently (Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh, & Gremler, 2004; Hill, Beatty, & Walsh, 2013). The full set of items was then ipsatized within individuals, to ensure a comparison of the relative importance of the items (Schwartz, 2007). Next, we clustered the respondents on their responses according to hierarchical cluster analysis with the Ward method. The elbow criterion and the dendrogram indicated the appropriate number of clusters; we selected a three-cluster solution.

To specify the NPO value items that best differentiate the three clusters, we examined all items separately in an analysis of variance, with cluster membership as the independent variable. We reviewed the F-statistics for each item and used post hoc analysis (Tukey-b) to compare the items and learn which of them differentiated most effectively among clusters of individuals. Finally, we discussed the resulting list of items with experts to ensure their ability to reflect differences among NPOs. This process resulted in a set of 16 items.

### 3.1.3. Validation of NPO values profile

Next, the 16 selected NPO value items were subjected to validation by a consumer panel (n = 1670), which confirmed the items' relevance for distinguishing NPOs. Respondents in the sample had to be familiar with at least one of the focal 13 NPOs for this study and evaluated particular NPOs on each of the 16 value items (Table 2). This approach is similar to previous research (Sargeant et al., 2008; Voeth & Herbst, 2008). Each respondent rated one to four NPOs, so each NPO was rated by 463–489 respondents, producing 6637 respondent–NPO combinations (i.e., each respondent assessed 3.98 NPOs on average). An analysis of variance with all 16 items to assess differences for the full set of 13 NPOs revealed that one of the items did not differentiate this set of NPOs ( $p = .087$ ; F-test). We eliminated this non-differentiating item. The final set of NPO values consists of 15 items that capture diversity in NPO values profiles and also relate to Schwartz's values (see Appendix B for details).

## 3.2. Data collection for hypothesis testing

The goal of this research is to test the relationship between donating to a specific NPO and NPO value congruence. The main study relied on a survey and focused on the same set of 13 NPOs. The survey was completed by 2157 respondents in a GfK consumer panel, with a response rate of 82.7%.

### 3.2.1. Measures

To determine donating behavior, we asked respondents about their monetary donations to each familiar NPO, classified as donating in response to door-to-door actions, periodic giving, and one-time donations by bank transfer. In our subsequent analyses, we combined the latter two categories, which constitute purposeful donations and are the focus of our research.

We measured the importance attributed to each of the 15 NPO value items on a 7-point scale, ranging from totally disagree to totally agree. The 21 Schwartz value items were measured on a 6-point scale, using the short Portrait Value Questionnaire (PVQ) (Schwartz, 2007). As control variables, we included age, gender, income, education, and perceived reputation of the charitable sector. This last measure consists of five items (Bennett, 2003; Michel & Rieunier, 2012; Webb et al., 2000), related to trustworthiness, performance, and accountability (Sarstedt & Schloderer, 2010). We measured education in three categories and income in seven groups (in thousands of euros). An additional dummy variable indicated whether the respondent provided income information.

We also added publicity expenditures by each NPO as a final control variable (Table 2). This variable can capture differences among NPOs, in terms of their focus on receiving money from the general public. As a proxy, we used the amount spent in euros on “publicity and communication” in 2014. This information is publicly available for 12 of the 13 NPOs in our data set.<sup>2</sup> To normalize the variable, we take its natural logarithm.

## 3.3. NPO value congruence

The calculation of the NPO congruence score requires some explanation. For each NPO, we have scores on 15 NPO value items. Therefore, we construct a values profile for each NPO by aggregating the score across individual respondents (Table 2), which establishes a single profile, reflecting the 15 items, for each NPO. Each respondent also provided her or his own NPO values profile, by rating the importance of each of the 15 NPO values for her or his own evaluations of an NPO. To arrive at congruence scores, we combine the data from these two distinct sets of ratings. For each respondent, we calculate a congruence score between two separate survey outcomes: her or his NPO values profile and the values profile that was offered for each NPO.

In sum, value congruence is the degree of similarity between the NPO values profile of an organization and the NPO values profile of the respondent. We use the identity coefficient (Zegers & ten Berge, 1985) to measure the congruence between perceived NPO values for the individual respondent and for the NPO (see Section 3.1). The identity coefficient produces a score between  $-1.0$  and  $1.0$ , where  $1.0$  is perfect congruence and  $0.0$  indicates no congruence. This score is calculated on the basis of all 15 NPO values associated with the individual respondents and all 15 NPO values associated with each NPO.

## 4. Model development

We predict that donating is a two-stage procedure: the decision to donate, followed by the decision to donate to a specific NPO. We

<sup>2</sup> See [www.cbf.nl](http://www.cbf.nl). We assigned the mean value for the one organization for which spending on publicity and communication was missing; this mean imputation did not affect the results.

**Table 3**

Selection model for the likelihood to make a purposeful donation to any of the 13 NPOs (Respondent-organization combinations = 2157).

Independent variables	Estimates base model		Estimates full model	
	$\gamma$	z-score	$\gamma$	z-score
Universalism			0.12	(2.92)*
Perceived reputation of charitable sector	0.27	(10.79)**	0.26	(10.33)**
Age	0.02	(10.83)**	0.02	(10.25)**
Income	0.08	(4.64)**	0.08	(4.79)**
Income disclosed	0.01	(0.08)	0.01	(0.13)
Mid-level education	0.18	(2.57)*	0.16	(2.31) <sup>o</sup>
High-level education	0.27	(3.30)**	0.24	(2.90)**
Female	0.11	(1.78)*	0.09	(1.56)
Intercept	−0.50	(−8.00)**	−1.01	(−5.46)**
Likelihood ratio (LR) $\chi^2$	287.52**		298.21**	
Pseudo-R <sup>2</sup>	0.10		0.10	
AIC	2613.9		2607.2	
BIC	2659.3		2658.3	
LR test			8.69**	

\*\*  $p < .001$  (two-tailed).

\*  $p < .01$  (two-tailed).

<sup>o</sup>  $p < .05$  (two-tailed).

connect two equations that represent these two stages using a Heckman (1979) selection approach, which is suitable for cross-sectional data analysis. Therefore, the two equations in our probit regression model are:

$$\text{Donor any organization}_i = \gamma_1 + \gamma_2 \text{Universalism}_i + \gamma_{3-9} \text{Controls} + \varepsilon_{i1} \quad (1)$$

where Donor any organization is a dummy indicating a purposeful donation to any of the 13 NPOs by individual respondent  $i$ , and all the Controls (sector reputation, age, income, dummy for stated income, education level, and gender) are centered. Then, conditional on Donor any organization $_i = 1$ :

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Donor}_{ci} = & \alpha_2 + \beta_1 \text{NPO Value Congruence}_{ci} + \beta_2 \text{Log Publicity}_c \\ & + \beta_{3-8} \text{Demographics}_i + \beta_9 \text{Selection Variable Donor}_i + u_{oi} \\ & + \varepsilon_{ci2} \end{aligned} \quad (2)$$

where Donor $_{ci}$  is a dummy that indicates a purposeful donation to NPO  $c$  by individual  $i$ ; NPO Value Congruence $_{ci}$  indicates the congruence between the NPO  $c$  and the individual  $i$  (measured by the identity coefficient); and Log Publicity $_c$  is the natural logarithm of the amount (in Euro) spent on publicity and communication in 2014 by the organization  $c$ , centered on a grand mean.

The Heckman (1979) selection model is a non-hierarchical probit model. As we show, universalism and the perceived reputation of the sector are unique to the first equation, which estimates the general propensity to donate. We calculate the inverse Mills ratio and introduce it in the second hierarchical model as a control (Selection Variable Donor).

#### 4.1. Evidence in support of Heckman selection

To verify the robustness of the selection model, we also estimate a simultaneous Heckman regression using conditional mixed-process regression on the entire sample of 2157 respondents. This estimation is possible if we use iterative maximum likelihood, in which the Newton–Raphson algorithm combines with the Davidon–Fletcher–Powell algorithm (see de Haan, Verhoef, & Wiesel, 2015). Following Antia, Zheng, and Frazier (2013), we employ the procedure developed by Roodman (2009). The results are in Appendix C. The appropriateness of the estimated two-stage process with Heckman selection is confirmed by the significant Wald chi-square statistic (3631.4;  $p < .001$ ), which

demonstrates that the predictors have satisfactory explanatory power across the two equations. Another critical indicator of the appropriateness of the Heckman selection in the first stage is the significantly negative cross-equation correlation of  $-0.39$  ( $p < .001$ ), which corresponds to that of the model in which we control for the cross-equation correlation using the inverse Mills ratio. This similarity supports our chosen two-stage process.

## 5. Results

### 5.1. Personal values and purposeful donations

To assess the appropriateness of universalism as the most important personal value in a donation context, we compare it with the nine other values from the values theory (Schwartz, 1992). Introducing all values separately into the model, we find that the values of security ( $\gamma = -0.10$ ,  $p < .001$ ), power ( $\gamma = -0.08$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and stimulation ( $\gamma = -0.07$ ,  $p < .05$ ) have significant, negative effects on making charitable donations. Benevolence ( $\gamma = 0.09$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and universalism ( $\gamma = 0.12$ ,  $p < .01$ ) have significant positive effects. Combining benevolence and universalism in one model renders benevolence non-significant ( $\gamma = 0.05$ ,  $p > .10$ ). The results are thus consistent with H1; universalism is the most important driver of donation likelihood. The outcomes relating to benevolence can be found in the appendix D and the outcomes of the resulting model are in Table 3.

Regarding the control variables, we find that donors generally are more likely to be older ( $\gamma = 0.02$ ,  $p < .001$ ), earn higher incomes ( $\gamma = 0.08$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and view the reputation of the charitable sector more positively ( $\gamma = 0.26$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Furthermore, a higher level of education has a positive effect on the likelihood of donating to any NPO ( $\gamma = 0.24$ ,  $p < .001$ ). However, women are not more likely to make any donation than men ( $\gamma = 0.09$ ,  $p > .05$ ).

Comparing this full model with a model that includes only the control variables, we find that the model fit is better for the full model, based on the likelihood ratio test ( $\chi^2(1) = 8.69$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The model also performs better on the Akaike information criterion (AIC) and Bayesian information criterion (BIC). The AIC decreases from 2613.9 to 2607.2, and the BIC decreases from 2659.3 to 2658.3.

### 5.2. Donation to a specific NPO and value congruence

To explore donations to each of the 13 NPOs, we first assess the model fit of the baseline model compared with a model that includes the NPO values congruence measure. Table 4 shows that the fit is better for the full model than the baseline model, according to the significant change in the likelihood ratio ( $\chi^2(1) = 14.05$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The full model also performs better, such that the AIC decreases from 10,309.8 to 10,297.8, and the BIC decreases from 10,382.9 to 10,378.1. Thus the findings of increased model fit and the estimate for NPO value congruence ( $\beta = 0.35$ ,  $p < .001$ ) offer empirical support for H2. A specific NPO is more likely to receive a donation from a donor if the values profile of that NPO is congruent with the NPO values profile of that individual donor.

The control variable of publicity expenditures has a significant, positive effect ( $\beta = 0.83$ ,  $p < .001$ ). For the other control variables, we interpret them in terms of their influence in getting a person to give to significantly more NPOs. Most of the effects are non-significant. Only older people are significantly more likely to give to more NPOs ( $\beta = 0.01$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Finally, the significant and negative effect of Selection Variable Donor ( $\beta = -0.56$ ,  $p < .001$ ) indicates that a selection effect exists.

### 5.3. Robustness checks

We use several checks to test the stability of our results, as detailed in Appendix E. Briefly, we assess alternative models that incorporate

**Table 4**  
Likelihood of a purposeful donation to a specific organization.

	Dependent variable			
	Donor specific organization		Donor specific organization	
	Base model		Model 1	
Independent variables	$\beta$	Z-score	$\beta$	Z-score
NPO value Congruence			0.35	(3.72)**
Controls				
Publicity (log)	0.81	(21.40)**	0.83	(21.71)**
Selection variable donor	−0.62	(−5.19)**	−0.56	(−4.67)**
Age	0.01	(2.59)*	0.01	(2.73)**
Income	−0.02	(−1.55)	−0.02	(−1.50)
Income disclosed	−0.06	(−1.01)	−0.07	(−1.01) <sup>o</sup>
Mid-level education	−0.01	(−0.30)	−0.01	(−0.21)
High-level education	0.06	(0.87)	0.06	(0.87)
Female	−0.03	(−0.64)	−0.03	(−0.67)
Intercept	−1.01	(−17.71)**	−1.07	(−17.92)**
Wald $\chi^2$	550.95**		563.18**	
AIC	10,309.8		10,297.8	
BIC	10,382.9		10,378.1	
LR test			14.05**	

Note: The sample size consists of the 13 donation decisions for the 844 respondents who make donations.

\*\*  $p < .001$  (two-tailed).

\*  $p < .01$  (two-tailed).

<sup>o</sup>  $p < .05$  (two-tailed).

the factors from the first stage into the second stage of the model. When we include universalism in the second stage of the model, we find no significant results. To evaluate other differences between NPOs, we also consider models with parameters for the NPOs. This model produces similar results. We compute the variance inflation factor (VIF) scores of the independent variables in each model. For the selection model, the VIF scores range between 1.04 and 1.53. For the second-stage model, the VIF scores range between 1.06 and 2.42. Thus, we find no problems with multicollinearity. Furthermore, we test model stability using a random split. The results indicate that all the hypothesized findings hold. These robustness checks and additional analyses thus offer evidence of the stability of our findings.

#### 5.4. Illustration: use of NPO values

To gain further insights into the workings of NPO values and provide more managerial implications, we consider the NPO values of two unique NPOs, A and B. These organizations exemplify how NPO values can inform an organization's positioning. For this illustration, we include donors whose congruence with either organization reaches at least the median congruence score (0.21). Because the NPO values are indexed relative to all NPOs, these scores represent deviations from the mean. In Fig. 2, the NPO values scores reveal both oppositions and similarities between two NPOs NPO A and NPO B. In this, our structure of NPO values resembles oppositions and compatibilities as in Schwartz (1992). For example, NPO value 5 (“fun for donors”) is higher than average in NPO A, but its NPO value 13 (“future generations”) is lower than average. For NPO B, we observe the opposite. In turn, donors to NPO A generally emphasize NPO values related to “fun for donors”, “providing a good feeling”, “utilizing scientific research”, and “being able to collect funds”—that is, values focused on the self or on protection. In contrast, donors to NPO B emphasize “future generations” “equal opportunities”, “changing society,” and “starting small-scale projects,” or NPO values focused on others, growth, and progress.

As these examples show, value congruity may imply an emphasis on distinct NPO values in different NPOs. To enhance its relationships with donors, NPO A should position itself as a powerful organization that also organizes fun events for donors. This same positioning for NPO B likely would disrupt its relationship with its most congruent donors. Instead, this NPO should promote a strong, universalist message, with a

focus on change. As these unique profiles illustrate, NPOs can rely on different strategies to establish enduring relationships with their highly congruent donors and also increase their donation likelihood.

## 6. Discussion

### 6.1. Contributions

Donations result from a two-stage process, and values are relevant at both stages. Monetary donations relate to Schwartz's personal values (Bardi & Schwartz, 2003); we find that universalism is the value that contributes most positively to general donation likelihood and offers the most informative personal value to explain donation choice. As a first theoretical contribution, we thus confirm research that attributes great importance to universalism in predicting prosocial behavior (Brunso et al., 2004; Thøgersen & Ölander, 2002). We also advance academic investigations of the complex relation between values and prosocial behavior (Sharma & Jha, 2017) by introducing the idea that values influence choices at different decision-making levels. Finally, we underline that the charitable donation choice process is a process of subjective preference (Berman, Al, Levine, & Small, 2018) and provide the NPO values tool as a first step in understanding how these subjective choices are made.

This study also contributes to the development of academic literature on non-profit marketing. Strategic fundraising often focuses on individual donors' identification with a specific NPO (Boenigk & Helmig, 2013). We therefore investigate whether donors look for organizations that best represent their own values, using a novel measure that supports comparisons. In particular, we develop a set of 15 NPO values, derived from the Schwartz values that can reveal the congruence between individual donors and organizations in relation to their NPO values. In turn, we show that this NPO value congruence drives purposeful donations. This result is in line with previous work highlighting the importance of congruity for donations and brand relations (e.g., Groza & Gordon, 2016). Finally, we advance literature on value congruity, by addressing congruity in relation to NPO values, as well as by comparing the NPO values of an individual donor and those of different NPOs. The findings show that a person is most likely to donate to an NPO with which her or his values, relative to other NPOs, are most congruent.



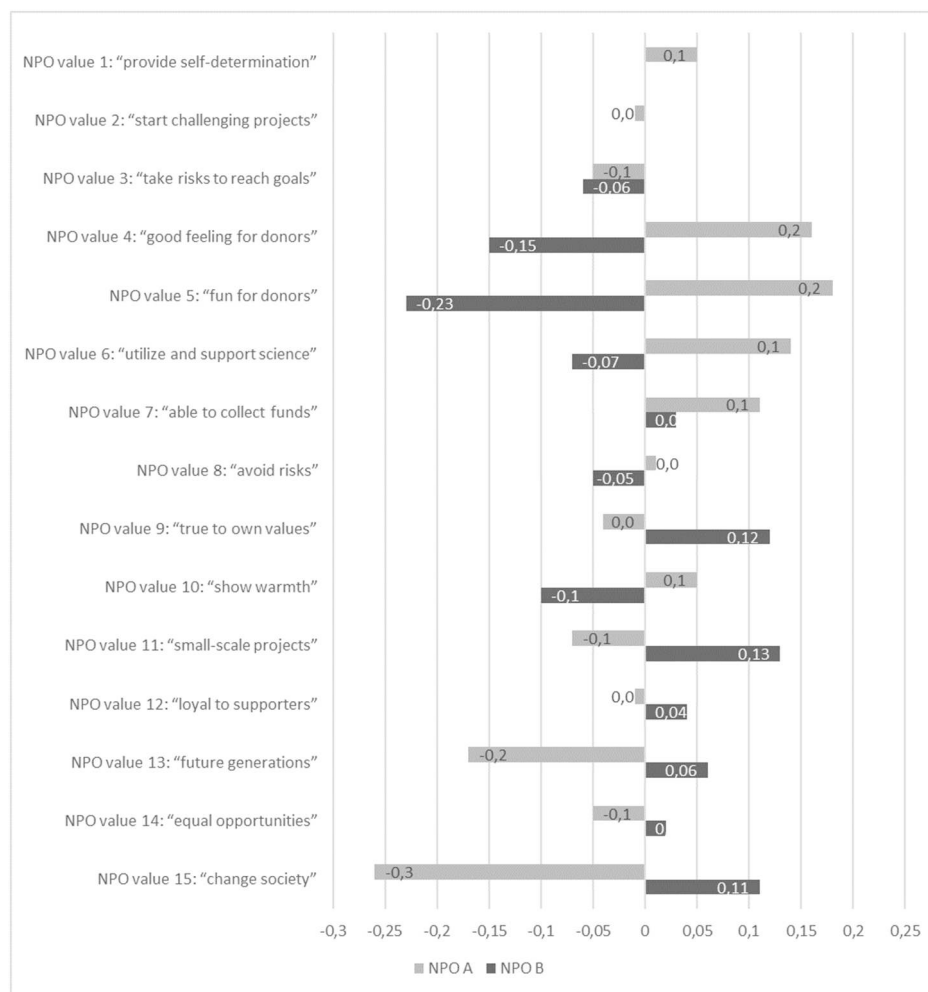


Fig. 2. Relative NPO value congruence scores of two exemplary NPOs.

A fundamental problem, from a marketing management perspective, is that as fundraisers focus on general donation drivers. This leads to highly similar fundraising strategies across the non-profit sector (Sargeant & Jay, 2014). Our model highlights the importance of a well-considered NPO strategy, rooted in the NPO's distinct values. Managers must carefully consider the values they emphasize in their communications to determine whether they reflect particular NPO values that increase specific donations to their own organization. Our illustration of two NPOs reveals how highly congruent donors express varying appreciation for distinct NPO values and thus distinct charitable organizations.

Purposeful donations are a key element in the relationship between NPOs and society. They provide a durable source of funding and help to legitimize the organization as an important societal actor. Professionalization in the charitable sector has led fundraising managers to use more marketing metrics (Chad, Kyriazis, & Motion, 2013), such as the Net Promoter Score. Critics state that the current metrics are not appropriate for NPO-specific market research (Schulman & Sargeant, 2013). Our approach using values can provide novel insights into what drives donations to a particular NPO. We thus recommend that NPOs add customer metrics, such as congruence with external values profiles of NPOs, which provide insights into their specific donation choices.

## 6.2. Limitations and future research perspectives

The current research paper has several limitations. Though we investigate 13 large Dutch NPOs that account for approximately 29% of total direct donations, we excluded smaller NPOs that could be important

to some specific group of donors. Expanding research to smaller NPOs and testing the model in different charitable landscapes represents an important next step. Moreover, this study could further explore the boundary conditions of value congruence in the form of interactions with the type of solicitation. Especially door-to-door solicitation could be an interesting boundary condition to explore as purposeful donations were explained as voluntary and private in this paper.

A major development in the NPO sector is active inducements to get people to engage in a wider range of charitable activities (Aaker & Akutsu, 2009), such as organizing events, purchasing sponsored products, or donating time. Future research should reflect on the influence of these different activities on the NPO values that donors ascribe to a particular NPO. Developing such a wider set of activities could be a means to alter the NPO values associated with a particular organization.

Moreover, future research can shed more light on monetary donations by assessing how the relationships between NPOs and their donors develop (Faulkner, Romaniuk, & Stern, 2016). A more detailed framework that maps which NPO values lead to changes in an individual donor's behavior also would be helpful. For example, the framework can specify which NPO values affect a person's first engagement with the NPO and which ones induce changes in his or her portfolio of NPOs (e.g., switching or adding an NPO). Research that explores these detailed charitable donation processes should use a longitudinal approach (Khodakarami, Petersen, & Venkatesan, 2015). Finally, future research can establish the relationship between purposeful donation choices and different life events (Moschis, 2007); major life events could instigate a change in the donor's NPO values. Examining changes in the personal

values that a person holds (Bardi, Lee, Hofmann-Towfigh, & Soutar, 2009) in turn may provide insightful explanations for changes in purposeful donations.

## Acknowledgements

The authors thank GfK Netherlands and, in particular, Stephan Dijcks and Dionne Thijssen for kindly providing access to the GfK consumer panel data and enabling us to collect data.

## Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.08.008>.

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